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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the notion that bilingual students' low academic achievement may be due to semilingualism (having limited language skills) in each of the two languages, and the cognitive deficits that presumably result. The subjects were two boys and two girls from the fifth and sixth grades with low proficiency in either English or Spanish. Data were drawn from observations and audiotaping of natural and structured conversations and interviews were conducted with each family to provide information on the students' language performance both within and outside school. No evidence emerged that any subject mixed Spanish and English, but all code-switched and could sustain discourse exclusively in either language when requested. All lacked vocabulary items in both languages. Three had greater strengths in Spanish than English, with vocabulary lacking primarily in school-related areas. All spoke English with a Spanish accent and used Spanish intonation patterns. Each had different strengths across settings in both languages, but was most able in small-group activities. All had negative feelings about Spanish, and all showed some signs of semilingualism. The findings strongly confirmed that teachers perceive their students as limited and adapt the instructional program to suit that perception. Second language education should de-emphasize deficits and focus on competencies. (MSE)

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A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE LINGUISTIC ABILITIES OF A SELECTED GROUP OF LOW ACHIEVING HISPANIC BILINGUAL STUDENTS

Paper submitted to the 1987 AERA Annual Meeting

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Introduction

Every student in the United States whose mother tongue is other than English has the possibility of becoming a bilingual and biliterate adult. However, for many children who do not know English when they enter school, speaking another language is perceived as a linguistic deficit. The low academic achievement and high dropout rate among language minority students in the United States would seem to lend support to this perspective. Mexican-American students are likely to lag behind Anglo students in virtually all subject areas, at all grade levels (Ogbu & Matute-Bianchi, 1986). Estimates of the dropout rate among Hispanics have ranged from 30-50% of high school age students.

Among students at risk for discontinuation and academic failure are those native Spanish-speakers who, after several years of schooling, do not show a clear dominance for Spanish or English, nor full proficiency in either language when assessed with traditional methods. The problem of academic failure among linguistic minority students is addressed in the literature of numerous social science disciplines. Many suggest that academic failure among minority students (monolingual English and bilingual) should be examined within the paradigm of social conflict theory. Several different explanations are advanced which emphasize various aspects of the conflicts experienced by members of low socio-economic groups in the mainstream society.

Popular explanations put forth in the 60's proposed that so-called lower class children are hindered by their 'lack of experiences' and the linguistic limitations which result from speaking non-standard or 'restricted code' dialects (Bernstein, 1966; Bereiter & Englemann, 1966). In this view, the home environments of lower-class minority students are insufficient to produce

in children the kinds of skills they need to succeed in an academic setting. Such explanations which are based on theories of 'cultural deprivation' have been rejected by most as ignorant and racist (Diaz et.al, 1986; Labov, 1970). Non-standard dialects have been shown to be complete, rule-governed linguistic systems which are fully adequate for cognitive operation (Labov, 1970, 1972).

An alternative explanation is that the academic failure among minority students is not due to any factors which are lacking in their background or in their language, but rather is the result of a school structure which is designed to replicate the existing social class system (Lenski, 1966; Schermerhorn, 1970). The schools are thought to act as a sorting mechanism to accomplish social stratification (Bowles & Gintis, 1977). This process is linked directly to the use of language in the classroom (Mehan, 1978). Yet another explanation within the social conflict paradigm is that for some minority students--those who see no possibility of succeeding 'within the system' no matter what their abilities--academic failure is actually a means to achieve status and peer-group recognition (Labov, 1970; McDermott,1974; Ogbu & Matute-Bianchi, 1986).

A different paradigm proposes that poor academic achievement among language-minority students is directly related to the fact they speak two languages. Both the consequences of the lack of English, and the postulated negative effects of bilingualism on cognition are offered as possible causes.

As children learn a second language they pass through varying levels of proficiency in that language, while at the same time they may be continuing to develop their native tongue. It is suggested that cognitive development is related to the overall level of proficiency attained in both the first and second language. (Cummins, 1981, 1984; Skutnabb-Kangas & Toukomaa, 1976). In

this view, under certain circumstances, a home-school language shift may create conditions under which some students remain at a low proficiency level in both languages. It is hypothesized that this may interfere with normal cognitive development and result in a condition called 'semi-lingualism' a term originally defined by Hansegard (1976) (Cummins, 1976; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981; Skutnabb-Kangas & Toukomaa, 1979). According to Skutnabb-Kangas (1979), semilingualism is produced when non-English speaking children from subordinate cultural groups are forced to receive instruction in English for a prolonged period of time without active support of their native language skills. The label "semi-lingual" is used to indicate that students have not fully developed the code of either their first or their second language and as a result have diminished cognitive skills. Bilingual students may be described as "lacking language" because of an apparent lack of fluency in both languages. This theory suggests that for many students, the limited nature of their language skills and the hypothesized cognitive deficits which result, are responsible for their academic difficulties.

The notion of semilingualism is controversial and has stirred passionate debate. It is problematic from several points of view. Primarily, the possibility of semilingualism has been used as an argument for native language instruction in bilingual education programs. Therefore, its proponents are reluctant to dismiss a potentially significant justification for an often politically unpopular instructional program. The wide dissemination of the term semilingual, however, has generated a new prejudice which stigmatizes many minority children (Ekstrand, 1983). Some critics object to the notion of semilingualism because it implies that the home environment of the child is inadequate to develop skills needed for academic success (Baral, 1980). They

suggest that the academic failure, and the perceived limitations of bilingual children can be fully explained by all the same factors that affect monolingual minority children. Others propose that students' abilities are simply underestimated by assessment processes. Traditional assessment practices seldom take into account abilities students display in non-academic contexts (Bennett & Slaughter, 1983; Phillips, 1983; Shuy, 1978). Also, faulty assessment instruments are blamed for inaccurately portraying the skills of many students and underestimating their true proficiences (Merino & Spencer, 1982).

The arguments against the existence of the condition "semilingualism" are persuasive. However, in spite of these criticisms, educators continue to use the term to describe students they perceive to be limited, whether the condition can be shown to exist or not. A popular belief, for example, is that children who code-switch (alternately use two languages) do so because they don't command enough pieces in either language to form a complete code and thus, they are considered semilingual (Grosjean, 1982).

In addition, a notion which has been disseminated to bilingual education practitioners has been widely misinterpreted. This notion holds that there are two levels of language ability--one for interpersonal skills and the other for academic learning. These levels of language ability are perceived to reflect greater or lesser cognitive abilities rather than different facets of communicative behavior. This perception has compounded what is clearly a deficit view of students who speak English as a second language, based largely on what students can't seem to do in the classroom. These perceptions seriously impact the programs designed for language minority students.

Regardless of how a student is labeled, learning theory supports instructional approaches which use the existing knowledge of the learner as the foundation for additional cognitive development. In order for schools to plan programs which will insure success for students who have differential skills in two languges, it is necessary to attempt to determine: a) levels of proficiency in each language, b) whether students speak standard or non-standard dialects, c) which language they use in particular contexts, and d) whether linguisitic abilities which are not demonstrated in particular classroom settings are demonstrated in other contexts (Philips, 1983; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981). The knowledge, information, and skills these students have acquired prior to, and outside of school must be identified and capitalized upon to extend learning (Heath, 1982, 1986; Philips, 1983; Spindler, 1974).

This study investigated the linguistic performance of four Hispanic bilingual students whose language dominance was not clearly defined and whose academic achievement was perceived by teachers to be limited by their language abilities in both English and Spanish. As a preliminary step in this research, several schools in a large Southwestern metropolitan school district were identified by bilingual program personnel as having high numbers of Hispanic students who were failing to achieve academically. Fifth and sixth grade bilingual teachers in two of those schools were interviewed to aid in the identification of the specific students for the study, as well as to gather data on the teachers' perception of their class's overall language abilities and academic potential. The teachers interviewed indicated that they felt some of their bilingual students were unable to do their school work because of the limitations of their language abilities. They believed that

many students had adequate skills for social interaction, but not for academic work. A comment made by one teacher typified the remarks made by all of them.

> I think this is a unique situation, because these students have not been placed in a bilingual situation earlier and therefore, they come to us already with two languages, but no dominant cognitive process in either language. . . . They haven't developed a dominance as far as academics are concerned in either language. As far as how they prefer to speak, yes. They are dominant in the Spanish language most of them. Because when they are speaking to people around them that they know speak Spanish, they speak Spanish. (Teacher Interview , p.4).

This quote reflects two of the major themes which emerged regarding their opinions about low achieving bilingual students' academic potential--that the students did not have the necessary 'concepts' needed for academic work in either language, and that they had internalized that English was the proper language for instruction in school, but that they used Spanish exclusively outside of school. A third theme was that there was a lack of support at home for academics, and that they forgot about school and no one reminded them, when they left the building.

Methods

The four subjects chosen for this study, two boys and two girls, were selected from a sample of 20 students in a concurrent study. They were chosen from among fifth and sixth grade students who did not demonstrate grade level academic proficiency in either English or Spanish. The students were all native Spanish speakers who had been in school in the United States since kindergarten. Two criteria were used to determine lack of proficiency: 1) a standardized test score two or more years behind expected grade level in reading, as measured by the English Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) reading subtest; and/or 2) failure to demonstrate grade level performance in Spanish as determined by teacher judgement and/or criterion referenced

assessments. District-administered oral language proficiency and dominance assessments, home language surveys, and teacher judgements were used as supportive data in the identification of these students. Students who had been referred for speech and language problems were not considered for the study.

Selection of the four students was based on a preliminary analysis of the data in the concurrent study. Language samples had been collected for students using four protocols: an informal conversation, a wordless picture book story, a concept-comprehension sample and an oral reading sample. These were used to identify, evaluate and compare levels of oral language proficiency and cognitive development in both English and Spanish. Quantitative analysis of the data for the 20 students provided numerical classifications of each student's proficiency. Preliminary analysis of that data indicated that students displayed various patterns of differential strengths in English and Spanish. The failure of these numerical ratings to adequately describe the strengths and weaknesses of the students indicated a need for an in-depth analysis in order to more accurately determine the nature of their language abilities.

The four subjects were selected from one classroom which increased the opportunities to observe the interactions of each student and also to promote interaction among them. In addition, the teacher in their classroom was very receptive to the researcher's presence and did not seem threatened by the ever-present notepad and tape recorder.

Specific questions which guided the inquiry focused on the students' uses of English and Spanish in and out of school; possible differential use of language across various contexts; and the existence of

patterns of skills common to these four students in each language and across languages.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted in two phases. Phase I focused on the oral language performance of the students in the school environment. Phase II focused on the students' oral language performance in the home and during out-of-school activities. Techniques employed to gather data included participant observation, audiotaping of natural and structured language samples and interviews.

All four students were tracked simultaneously in order to maximize the opportunities for data collection over the longest possible time period. Over a two month period thirty days were spent in the classroom, during which time the researcher regularly acted as a tutor and small group instructor for the subjects and their classmates. This amounted to a total of more than 200 hours of participant observations. Data collection focused upon the verbal interaction between the students and their teachers, paraprofessionals, and peers. This included the students' use of Spanish and English in both academic and non-academic contexts.

After a three-week period of extensive preliminary observations, students were audiotaped as a group during their various school day activities over a period of approximately four weeks. Data were gathered on the language used for different subject areas; in small group, whole group, and one-on-one settings; and during non-academic periods such as special classes (music, art and P.E.), the lunchroom, and the playground. During this time, each student was observed individually on a rotating basis so that each was the sole focus

of observation for two half days. Short segments were taped and later transcribed for analysis.

Towards the end of the data collection period, which coincided with the end of the school year, five individual and group situations were created to generate student interaction around specific tasks. Individual sessions were arranged to provide an opportunity to focus each of the students' language on tasks which might illuminate their thinking processes. Three tasks adapted from the Harvard Scientific Thinking Project (1979) were used. Two were Piagetian tasks - conservation and class inclusion. The third centered on the concept of gravity.

For a fourth task, all four students worked together. They were asked to construct a candle-powered Christmas ornament called 'Angel Chimes' with which they were not familiar. The students were again asked to focus their language on a task which required some skill in reasoning. In addition, the students were able to work and talk together, without adult supervision. This provided an opportunity to see how their language use compared to other previously recorded situations when an adult was present. Finally, students were asked to read one week's list of spelling words and give the definitions. If they could not define a word, they were asked to use it in a sentence. All sessions were audiotaped and later transcribed for analysis.

Phase II

The goal of Phase II was to gather data on language use and capabilities outside of the school environment. Data collection involved after school outings with the students and contact with their families. Contact with the families was inititated soon after Phase I began and continued until the end

of the school year, a period of two months. More than fifty hours were spent with the students and their families during this time.

Several outings were organized for the students, either as a group or in pairs. Activities included a trip to the flea market, the university, the public library, the zoo, a fast-food restaurant, a community garage sale and the researcher's home. On each outing, at least one hour of conversation was tape recorded.

Throughout the study, background data were collected in order to map the students' academic progress and their pattern of language development in school. Interviews designed to yield more detailed information about the students' previous academic performance, language use and the classroom language environment were then conducted with the students' past and current teachers. Interviews were also conducted with each family designed to elicit information on the use of English and Spanish in the home and in the community, as well as the parents' perceptions of their children's linguistic abilities in both languages.

Data Analysis

Data from both Phase I and II were analyzed to provide information on students' language use in a variety of natural situations. Data were analyzed qualitatively for linguistic, discourse and social interaction competencies, based on designs developed by Kayser (1986) and by Bennett & Slaughter (1983). Observation notes and transcriptions of the audiotaped samples and interviews were qualitatively analyzed. A summary description of the students' home and school environments was developed. Individual profiles were then created for each student which included a description of the students' linguistic,

discourse and narrative competencies in English and Spanish. Their performance was compared to determine if the students displayed differential strengths across settings and across languages. The data were also analyzed to determine if there were patterns of skills common to the four students in each language and across languages.

Interviews with teachers and parents were transcribed with comments added after each interview. Their perceptions of the students' abilities were compared with the students' demonstrated competencies in various contexts.

Findings

The findings of this study relate not only to the linguistic competencies displayed by the students, but also to the organization of instruction and the impact of this organization on their language abilities. This paper will focus on the profiles of the students language abilities. A description of the students' home and school environments is included to provide a context for the description of the language competencies. All names of people and places are fictional.

The Homes

Marta, Jose, Ignacio, and Reina all lived within three blocks of one another in a low-income working class neighborhood not far from the city's downtown area. The area was a patchwork of predominantly black or Hispanic blocks, and the students' immediate neighborhood was almost exclusively Hispanic.

In many ways the small town atmosphere of a Mexican pueblo was recreated in this small urban enclave. The gardens located behind or next to almost every house had been planted in late March and were filled with blooming plants by mid-May. Once a week a woman came to sell special cheeses and

sausages, key ingredients in Mexican cooking. Vendors who came by regularly offered everything from vegetables to scissors sharpening. Instead of wooden carts they drove slowly through the neighborhood in pickups and station wagons, hawking their wares in Spanish. People were out in the streets at all hours of the day and night - playing, working on cars, drinking or just talking. Everyone in the neighborhood knew (or conjectured about) what everyone else was doing. The fact that many people in the neighborhood were undocumented workers meant that everyone was always on their guard for 'la migra' (U.S. INS officials).

The students' home environment reflected their parents' Mexican culture and language. In every home, there was always a pot of beans on the stove and traditional Mexican dishes like chicken and rice, eggs and chorizo and quesadillas were the main food fare. At mealtime, children were often sent to the store to buy fresh tortillas.

Small and crowded living rooms were dominated by large color T.V.s. Radios were always tuned in to the music programs of the local Spanish language station and each family subscribed to the Spanish-language cable channel. However, after school the children's choice of cartoons in English or shows like Fame often conflicted with their mothers' choice of one of the many soap operas from Latin America.

Only one of the parents said they spoke any English, and conversations between parents and among older family members, small children and friends were almost exclusively in Spanish. The only use of English at home came from the students themselves and their school-age siblings. As reported by parents, none of the four students had spoken any English before they entered school and they were all observed to usually speak Spanish with their parents.

However, their use of Spanish with siblings, peers and family friends varied considerably. All of the parents reported that the students preferred to speak English and they all thought their children were more proficient in English than in Spanish.

The school

When the students left their homes for school, they entered a different environment where the English language and non-Hispanic culture prevailed. They attended Ball Elementary, an aging brick building located over a mile away from their homes. The school was at the edge of a residential neighborhood where most of the families were black. According to the principal, about 80% of the school's student population was minority, evenly split between Blacks and Hispanics. The ethnic mix of the students was reflected in the non-professional staff of the school and to a lesser degree in the faculty which was about 50% Anglo.

Although the school had served a substantial Hispanic population for many years, the 85/86 school year was the first in which a formal bilingual program was implemented. At each grade level, fourth through sixth, there were three monolingual and one bilingual classroom. The majority of the faculty and staff were monolingual English-speakers and most of the Spanish-speaking people in the building were connected directly to the bilingual program. Each of the three bilingual aides was assigned to work exclusively with one of the bilingual classroom teachers. With the exception of the Resource Room teacher, the rest of the teaching staff for special classes (music, gym, remedial reading), as well as the librarian, were monolingual English speakers. In the library there were only a handful of Spanish books available for students to check out.

The addition of a bilingual component to the school had introduced some changes into the once monolingual English environment. Spanish began to be used, although minimally, for some official school functions and in the everyday life of the school. For example, every school assembly included a welcome or a song in Spanish and a few of the hall displays were either totally in Spanish or had Spanish as well as English components. Still, the vast majority of announcements, displays, bulletin boards and posters were in English only, such as the sign at the entrance which read: "Ball Elementary is on the road to Excellence!"

The classroom

There were 22 students in the class, 11 boys and 11 girls. Four of the students were black, four were Anglos and the rest were Mexican or Mexican-American. Of the fourteen Hispanic students, one girl was a monolingual English speaker, two boys were monolingual Spanish speakers and the rest were native Spanish speakers who had had at least four years of previous instruction in English. Most of the students had been in the same classrooms since kindergarten. That school year was the first time all but one of the subjects had received any formal instruction in Spanish.

Although there was no visible hostility in the classroom, there was an unspoken division in the class between the dominant Spanish-speakers and the monolingual English speakers. Except for a few students, the two groups were seldom seen to mix when they were free to choose their partners. Two of the Hispanic girls were grouped with the English speakers for instruction, but in social situations they gravitated towards the other Hispanic children.

The teacher, Mr. Chavez, was a native Spanish-speaker who had grown up in the community. He had eleven years of teaching experience. Although this was

his first year as an 'official' bilingual teacher, he had had many years of experience with Spanish-speaking students who were often purposely assigned to his classroom. The aide, Mrs. Montoya, also a native Spanish-speaker, had worked as a paraprofessional at Ball Elementary for ten years, but this was the first year she had been assigned to work only with one teacher. Most of the students knew her already because the previous year she had often been assigned to work with Spanish-speaking children for small group instruction.

In the room there was little evidence of Spanish materials, except for the calendar in the front of the room and one of the bulletin boards in the back. For most of the two months of the study, one bulletin board remained empty except for the partially completed title: "Nuestros mejores traba" [Our best wor]. The stark physical environment inside the room belied the warmth of the atmosphere created by Mr. Chavez and Mrs. Montoya. They both often expressed their desire that the students be successful and that the classroom be a place where the students were comfortable and relaxed.

The pattern of language use which Mr. Chavez had established to cope with non-English speaking children before the bilingual program's establishment is one which carried over to his current classroom. At the time of the study, Spanish was used for instruction only for clarification of concepts in simultaneous translation with English, or in response to specific queries made in Spanish. The students had objected to the all-Spanish instruction when it was originally introduced. Mrs. Montoya, who worked directly with the Spanish speaking students for math, reported that during the first nine weeks of school when they tried to teach in Spanish, the students would not pay attention, did not do their homework and would ask, "Why do we have to do this in Spanish?" In addition, the teacher believed that the students didn't have

any of the basic vocabulary in math and therefore the whole time was spent teaching new terms for old concepts. When the students asked to switch back to English, the instructional program was modified to suit their perceived needs.

The following brief excerpt is taken from a typical math lesson. This segment was preceded by five minutes of instruction in English, and followed by several minutes of simultaneous translation and then several more minutes exclusively in English.

Mr. Chavez: Let's go on to number 3. We're working mainly on perimeter at this time. What is the distance around any shape? We have a square here. What is the distance of one side here? ¿Qué es la distancia de un la'o de este cuadro número 3. ¿Qué es la distancia, Ricardo?	What is the distance of one side on square number 3. What's the distance, Ricardo?
Ricardo: (Pause) ¿La distancia?	The distance?
Chavez: Sí.	Yes.
Ricardo: ¿De un la'o?	From one side?
Chavez: De un la'o.	From one side.
Ricardo: Five	Five
Chavez: Five.. feet and hay otro número ahí.	Five ... feet and there's another number there.
Ricardo: Four	Four.
Chavez: Four inches es decir cinco pies y cuatro pulgadas. Por que aquí en los Estados Unidos uh medimos en pulgadas. En México..	Four inches, that is five feet and four inches. Because here in the United States we measure in in inches. In Mexico?
Ricardo: Metros.	Meters.
Chavez: Sí, metros. OK. All right it's five feet, four inches (Writes it). What's the next side going down, Ricardo? ¿El otro lado que va de arriba hasta abajo?	Yes. Meters. OK. All right it's five feet, four inches. What's the next side going down, Ricardo? The other side that goes from top to bottom?

(Classroom Tape 1, pp. 1,2)

The lesson continued from here in English and after five minutes returned again to simultaneous translation.

Language competencies

Varied language competencies were exhibited by each of the four students across settings. They all demonstrated skills outside of the classroom (in both languages) which were not evident in their everyday interaction in school. Differences were less pronounced between in and out-of school contexts than they were for size of group and the proximity of English speakers. Their greatest strengths, as might be expected, were demonstrated in the context of small groups of people who were familiar to the students. The skills demonstrated indicated assets which could be built upon in the academic setting. The following are individual profiles of each students' demonstrated competencies.

Reina.

Reina was a conscientious student who frequently asked for help with her assignments and was concerned that her work be correct and complete. All of the adults interviewed about Reina described her as a likeable, polite and talkative girl. Among friends and with adults she trusted, she chattered at length in both English and Spanish. But she did not express herself as freely in all settings. She was withdrawn and shy in large groups and seldom talked or spoke out during interactions which involved the whole class.

In contrast, in small groups, particularly in the group of Spanish speakers, Reina was extremely animated. She volunteered information, always had her hand raised to answer questions and never hesitated to give her opinion. Reina usually used English (with some codeswitching) in the

classroom. She often addressed the teacher and the aide in Spanish and she was not shy about teasing them. With the researcher she usually began speaking in English, but readily switched when asked to do so, or when Spanish was used persistently over a period of time.

English competencies: In terms of the basic structural components of English - phonology, morphology, syntax - Reina had mastered the basics, though she had a noticeable Spanish accent. She could handle a variety of verb tenses, and used the correct form of many irregular verbs in the past (bought, went, rang, woke). She was capable of extended discourse marked by the use of subordinate clauses. The errors she made most consistently in English involved the use of compound past tenses and the negative.

Reina was a versatile conversation partner and was able to handle many of the structural elements of a conversation. She demonstrated that she could initiate topics, request information and clarification, provide background information when needed, and shift a conversation back to a previous topic. However, the most important information she had to convey was not always clear. In the example below she has been asked whether she goes often to the Flea Market.

> Yeah, my mom buys all kinds of stuff there. She buys like little [unintelligible] for my little sister. It's cause.. she gots some new dresses. She buys her dresses, and, um, yeah, dresses. Cause sometimes they sell little dresses. and, um, well, she bought her some socks, and, um, cause she wants to buy her a little dress for Easter Day. (Reina - Informal Conversation, 17-22).

The clarity of both her conversations and her narratives was diminished by her lack of full control over the syntactic structures and vocabulary of English. For example she often shifted tenses inappropriately:

> I would get that shelf [dresser] down, very quietly and then I would put the drawers down and they won't get out. And I would go and call the police. (Wordless Picture Book, 84-86].

Spanish competencies: Reina, who was the strongest Spanish speaker of the four students in the study, demonstrated greater proficiency in Spanish than in English. Her abilities in Spanish were evident across all the contexts which were examined. She had a positive attitude towards the use of both languages and indicated a pride in her Spanish speaking abilities. She used Spanish in the school setting for social purposes and to elicit clarification of instructional material. She readily maintained the use of Spanish when requested to do so.

She was able to manipulate multiple tenses appropriately and seldom hesitated.

Y abrió la puerta y se	And he opened the door and she
asustó. Fué corriendo,	was startled. She went running
corriendo. Le hablaban,	and running. They were calling
pero ella no oyó y se fué.	after her, but she didn't hear
Y eso es lo último.	and she left. And that is the end.

(After School Tape 2A, 623-625).

She demonstrated facility with the conventions of conversation and narration in both languages. One weakness Reina demonstrated in Spanish was in vocabulary. Her mother said she thought Reina had a bigger vocabulary in English because she didn't use the Spanish equivalent for many words, especially those that she had learned and used at school. The words she did not know were mainly for information and concepts that had been taught in school. 'Fence,' 'library,' 'lunch time,' and 'playground' were among the English vocabulary items found in Reina's Spanish discourse. However, she was also aware when errors were made in Spanish and corrected her own, as well as

those of the people around her, including other students, the researcher and even Mr. Chavez.

Mr. Chavez:	Yo quiero que explaña lo que hicieron.	I want you to [explain] what you did.
Reina:	Explicar, no explañar, Mr. Chavez.	'Explicar' not 'explañar' Mr. Chavez.

(Field Notes, p.72).

Despite any lack of specific vocabulary items, Reina was able to articulate more clearly in Spanish her understanding of the concepts discussed in the various protocols.

Marta.

Marta was a girl who did not seem very concerned about her school work. She was easily distracted by her neighbors and often fooled with papers in her desk while Mr. Chavez was teaching. Originally described as "a bit slower to retain information than some of the other students", it later became apparent that her lack of retention was likely due to inattention, and not inability. Mr. Chavez said he thought Marta was one of the students who was getting little input at home, and that once she left school he imagined that she never thought about school until the bell rang the next morning.

The observations did not, however, support these conclusions. Marta loved to read and was familiar with popular children's authors. She regularly brought home and read magazines and books which she had borrowed from the school library. On both trips to the researcher's home she asked to be taken to the public library.

English competencies: Marta was classified as a proficient English speaker. Like Reina she had mastered the basic structures of the language, but not all the tenses. Her intonation pattern was heavily influenced by Spanish, but she had few pronunciation problems. She lacked specific

vocabulary items and did not know the meaning of many of the words used in the instructional program.

Marta's main linguistic difficulties were with the correct use of the negative, particularly in the past tense, compound verb conjugations and noun/verb agreement. For example:

> Come on Jose, you doesn't know them (Angel Chimes, 292).
>
> So they all said no, no, they never wouldn', they said they never can make it (After School Tape 2A, 227).
>
> Then why is that bubbles coming out? (Student-made Tape, 12)

The most noticeable characteristic of Marta's English was that she hesitated and stumbled over her words and often repeated herself, especially at the beginning of a sentence. In virtually every context she seemed to edit her thoughts after they came out of her mouth. Despite this, Marta talked all the time and she conversed with ease in English. She was able to initiate and maintain topics and she usually provided adequate background information. However, she did not always respond directly to questions that were asked, either she didn't listen or she wouldn't be detered from finishing her thought.

Her characteristic hesitations and stumblings made her appear to be less competent than she was. For example:

> And one day, and one day, and one day, the servant couldn't last any longer without seeing it, so he took it to the King, he took it to the kitchen (After School Tape 2A, 152-155).
>
> The little boy saw the, saw the, and he saw, he saw, he saw them. He said, "Bye," (Wordless Picture Book, 52-53).
>
> And he was so trusted, he was the only one who could go in the prince's, in the queen's dresser. And one day the queen was missing a diamond, this big, on a ring, and, and, since the servant that could be, that was supposed to be trusted, so he got blamed for stealing it (After school Tape 2A, 164-170).

Marta demonstrated the greatest understanding of the information presented in the concept-comprehension sample in English. None of the questions had to be repeated or rephrased though she hesitated before answering several of them. She demonstated an understanding of the concepts in the tasks in English, although she not articulate her reasoning clearly especially in the gravity task. She showed her greatest strengths in a one-to-one situation and in small groups where her attention could be focused on the task which was to be completed.

Spanish compentencies: Marta's reluctance to speak Spanish limited the data available on her conversational abilities. Though she preferred English, she was a more proficient Spanish speaker. Her speech was easily understandable, though she always spoke rapidly and in a much softer voice in Spanish then English. Her only apparent structural limitation was a lack of specific vocabulary. She hesitated occasionally when she spoke, but it was not a pervasive quality in every setting as it was in English. Among her strengths was her ability to use a variety of tenses.

Más difícil. Los bancos no tendrían quien los protegera. (Concept comprehension, 38-39)	More difficult. There wouldn't be anyone to protect the banks.

Marta often used English words or phrases in her Spanish, but she did not use English constructions. Most of her codeswitches were at the level of clauses or for specific vocabulary items and were primarily, but not exclusively, from Spanish to English.

Nancy:	¿Cuándo? ¿Después de la escuela?	When? After school?
Marta:	No. At lunch time. Cuando viene él.. Pues con el primer día que él salió, lo agarraban todos.	No. At lunch time. When he came...Well, from the first day he went ouside, they all were grabbing him.
(After School Tape 3, 442-443).		

Although Marta demonstrated greater control over the grammatical structures of Spanish, she used English at every opportunity. It was not that she couldn't converse in Spanish, she wouldn't. Even on occasions when all those around her were speaking Spanish and she was requested to do so, she usually maintained the use of English. This happened in the classroom, during the Angel Chimes task, in the car with Reina and her sister, and even at home. Her Spanish did not seem to be deteriorated as a result of her constant use of English, but she lacked some vocabulary items, mainly related to classroom instruction. She did not accept the use of Spanish as a language of instruction.

Jose.

Jose was one of the most outgoing students in his class. He seemed at ease with everybody in the room. He spent most of his time with the other Spanish-speaking boys, but it was not unusual for him to sit with one of the Black or Anglo boys during small group activities, or at Music. Jose was never absent from school and for the most part completed his assignments, but he had a tremendous amount of energy and could not sit still. Jose's home environment, while predominantly Spanish, was the only one in which there was any kind of consistent interaction with English speaking people. They had both friends and relatives who did not speak Spanish.

English competencies: Jose was the strongest English speaker among the four students and the only one who demonstrated stronger proficiency in English than in Spanish. He lacked vocabulary in English and had some difficulty with tenses, but he had achieved near native fluency. He usually spoke without hesitation and generally the errors he made did not interfere with the clarity of his discourse. He did have occasional difficulties with

irregular verb forms and with compound tense, though they seldom interfered with meaning. Many of the errors in Jose's speech were common in the non-standard English dialect spoken around him.

I ain't gonna say that part (After school Tape 2A, 350).

Who gots my toes? (After school Tape 2A, 358).

So he knew everything what the animals said (After School Tape 2A, 174).

Jose was a talented story teller in English. He created dialog for characters and shifted tenses to set it off from the rest of the narrative. He was also able to remember whole stories after hearing them just once.

> This is the story of the loud mouth frog. Once there was a frog named "Loud Mouth Frog." All that she ate was flies and mosquitos. She got sick and tired. She said, "Am I gonna eat flies and mosquitos for the rest of my life?" So she decided to go ask some other animals. The first one she met was the squirrel and she said, [in a squeaky voice] "Can you come out?" No wait. " "Squuiirrell!" she screamed out, "What do you eeeeeat?" And then she came out. She said, "It's that loud mouth frog. I eat nuts."
> (After School Tape 2A, p. 12).

Although Jose had a much larger vocabulary in English than any of the other students, there were many words he didn't know, or couldn't remember. The lack of vocabulary did not seem to bother him in a conversation where the meaning could be negotiated. However, it seemed to frustrate him when it interrupted his thoughts and deterred him from telling a story as in the example below.

> Whooossssh, blew out the fire, storm start appearing. Howl start appearing.. Whatchacallem. Witches blowing making noises and the old lady tucked her head under... under... Sleeps in the couch, under.. whachacalit, that one pillow, whatever. Mattress. Whatever! Puts her head under there (After school Tape 2A, 354-358).

In this segment, he lapsed out of the character and his tone of voice indicated impatience, as if he didn't want to be reminded that he didn't know the words.

Spanish competencies: Jose's teacher said he was equally fluent in Spanish and English, but the data did not support that assertion. The most noticeable feature of Jose's Spanish was that it sounded distorted because of his pronunciation. He consistently substituted the sound /a/ for /e/ in monosyllabic words, 'Sa fue' for 'se fue' [He went] or 'ma comi' for 'me comi' [I ate]. He also used dipthongs not normally found in Spanish pronunciation. For example, he pronounced 'orilla' [edge] as if it were spelled 'oriya' in English. He made many grammatical errors and occassionally used English constructions in Spanish. For example: "Los ciegos lo quieran mucho por ayudandolo" which literally translated means "Blind people like them alot for helping them." However, Spanish demands the use of the infinitive where English uses the present progressive: "Los ciegos los quieren mucho por ayudarlos."

Some of the narrative competencies Jose demonstrated in English were also evident in his Spanish narratives; he was animated, he used gestures and changed intonation for emphasis. In spite of this, the Spanish stories lacked the grammatical complexity and richness of detail he used in English.

Jose:	Viva cinco personas en una casa y su papá sa fué pa' sa fué para trabajo. Y la puerta estaba abierta, so ya sa fueron dormir. And they go. Su nombres fueron José, Rosa, Veronica y Daniel. And then. Y luego lego estaban durmiendo.	Five people live in a house and the father went to work. And the door was open so, they already went sleep and they go. His names were Jose, Rosa, Veronica, and Daniel. And then. And then, and then they were sleeping.
Reina:	Estabamos.	We were.
Jose:	Estabamos durmiendo. ¡No! Estaban durmiendo. Pretend it wasn't me.	We were sleeping. No. They were sleeping. Pretend it wasn't me.

(After School Tape 2A, 405-412)

Jose displayed the most code-switching behavior of any of the students. On many occasions he was requested to speak only in Spanish, but as long as someone who spoke English was nearby he never did so for more than a few sentences. The only time he had an interchange of any length (less than ten minutes) in Spanish was when he was alone at the zoo with a monolingual Spanish speaker. Ricardo did most of the talking. He corrected Jose's grammar several times and he had to explain to him what 'espulgar' [delouse] meant. As soon as they were joined by the reseacher, Jose switched to English even though he was reminded several times that Ricardo didn't understand.

Ignacio.

Of the four students in the study, Ignacio had the lowest level of academic achievement in language related subjects and he was the student perceived to be the most limited by his abilities. He could not read well aloud and his spelling on compositions was difficult to decipher. His teacher attributed this to a lack of full proficiency in both English and Spanish. All of the adults who had worked with Ignacio said that his difficulties with language were holding him back from doing well in school.

In school, Ignacio seemed to have two personalities. The more common one was shy, almost sullen, but there were times when he was outgoing and relaxed. His moods were unpredictable and he approached every academic task as if it were going to be difficult. He was obviously frustrated by his shortcomings and on several occasions he burst into tears when he stumbled over words in his reading or did poorly on a test. He was often absent and he skipped school three times, including one day when an outing was scheduled. He was suspended for three days for swearing at the gym teachers and calling him a "bastard" when he felt he had been wrongly accused of mishbehavior.

For the most part the instructional program in his classroom was irrelevant to him. For example, every week he followed the spelling routine--pretest, "five times each," definitions, exercises and post-tests--but as the interchange below illustrates, he viewed the process as an end in itself.

> Nancy: Did you study the definitions?
> Ignacio: We don't have to study them.
> Nancy: That's the whole reason for doing them.
> Ignacio. No it ain't.
> Nancy: So that you learn what the words mean.
> Ignacio: Nuh uh.
> Nancy: Why do you think you do them?
> Ignacio: Cause we need em.
> Nancy: For what?
> Ignacio: For this. [pointing to the exercises in the book].
> (Spelling Task, 38-50).

He went through the weekly routines because he had to, but with the exception of Math he showed little interest in the content.

In spite of his language problems, Ignacio excelled in math. According to Mr. Chavez, he was one of the few students who actually understood the processes they were supposed to be learning. Not surprisingly, math was Ignacio's favorite subject and he said he hated reading and spelling.

English competencies: Ignacio's performance in English varied greatly according to setting. In structured situations with adults he usually said as little as possible, and as a result he scored only functionally proficient in English on the Language Proficiency Measure. It was sometimes difficult to understand what Ignacio said because he usually talked rapidly and swallowed the ends of his words. He also had a pronounced lisp and a Spanish accent.

An examination of his discourse across contexts, however, revealed that he was quite fluent and like the other three students, he had mastered all the basic structures of English.

> I liked about the burnt coat that was made of buffalo and the mirror that was made out of diamond dust (Classroom Tape 5A, p.10).

> You can't dig through the middle of the earth and go to the other side because when you get too deep, you'll get too hot, you'll roast (Gravity Task, 91-93).

He made occasional errors in the use of multiple tenses and in negative morphemes, but his errors did not interfere with his meaning. He often left out articles and pronouns and he sometimes used the wrong form of a word.

> Like if you throw a rock over there, they'll make a complain (Spelling Task, 78).

> If the sun is direct by your house (Concept comprehension, 30).

Ignacio demonstrated extreme variation in his competence in different conversational settings. Especially during the initial protocols he gave many one and two word answers, offered little contextual background and only occassionally elaborated on a thought using more than one clause. In contrast, when Ignacio was in small groups, especially with his Spanish-speaking peers, he demonstrated that he could be an active participant in conversations, and he was proficient at handling extended discourse. His behavior on an outing to the mountains provides a good example of his ability

to extend discourse. During the trip, he spoke mostly in English as did the rest of the students. He used complete sentences, gave contextual and background information, asked for clarifications, made requests for information, and challenged other's assertions. He not only talked, but he made fun of the other students, sang, played with the sounds of words, and created rhymes.

Spanish competencies: In Spanish, Ignacio usually spoke softly and often swallowed the ends of his words, but he showed very little indication of having a lisp. He displayed competence in using all the basic structures of Spanish. There was some evidence that he was lacking vocabulary items and beginning to use borrowings from English like 'pushar' [to push] and 'cachar'[to catch] which were common in the local dialect of Spanish. However, when he was asked to remain in Spanish he seldom switched into English, except for particular vocabulary items. And he always remembered and used new vocabulary items once he was told (or reminded) of them.

Nancy:	¿Tú sabes la fecha?	Do you know the date?
Ignacio:	Fecha?	Date?
Nancy:	¿Cuál día es hoy?	What day is today?
Ignacio:	Sí. Uh. No me lo se en español.	Yes. Uh. I don't know it in in Spanish.
Nancy:	¿Tú sabes en numeros?	Do you know in numbers?
Ignacio:	Cuatro dieciseis, ochenta y seis.	Four, sixteen, eighty-six.

Two days later when he was asked, " Cual es la fecha?" he answered without hesitation.

Ignacio's conversational abilities varied across contexts in Spanish as they did in English. He seldom volunteered to speak out in class. In the informal conversation sample he gave minimal responses and at one point said

he didn't want to answer any questions. But in small group situations with his friends, he displayed his competency in many ways.

The Angel Chimes task was the only situation in which the four students were recorded with no adult visibly present. The contrast between Ignacio's language use in this context and most of the others was remarkable because he was never more vocal. He not only actively participated, he often directed and dominated the action of the other students. He was animated throughout the task as he sang to himself and occasionally made fun of the other students. He used exaggerated intonation and a deep-throated '<u>ranchero</u>' accent to emphasize his ideas. He made suggestions for action and defended his choices. He tricked Jose into falling for a double entendre joke and he even corrected Jose's grammar and pronunciation in Spanish.

<u>Summary of Findings</u>

There was no evidence that any of the students spoke a mixture of Spanish and English. All of them did lack vocabulary items in both languages. Occasionally each used syntactic structures characteristic of the other language in both English and Spanish. All of the students code-switched, usually from Spanish to English, for words and phrases. They could all sustain discourse exclusively in either language when requested, though one student had difficulty doing so in Spanish.

Analysis of the data from multiple settings indicated that three of the students displayed greater strengths in Spanish than English. Those three demonstrated full proficiency in Spanish when their language use was examined across settings. The vocabulary items they lacked related mainly to the concepts taught in school. One of the students displayed greater proficiency

in English and there was evidence that his Spanish was beginning to deteriorate. He was the one student who had difficulty maintaining discourse exclusively in Spanish and the one with the weakest vocabulary in Spanish.

All the students spoke English with a Spanish accent and used Spanish intonation patterns in their speech, but this did not interfere with their ability to be understood. They all had mastered the basic morphology and syntax of English but to varying degrees had difficulty with complex tenses, negatives and idioms. None of the students displayed a level of proficiency equal to that of their monolingual-English speaking peers. For two of the students, the lack of control over the syntactic structures of English interfered with the clear expression of meaning. A third student demonstrated greater control over the syntactic structures, but his lack of self-confidence diminished his linguistic output in most settings. For this reason, he appeared to be much less proficient than he was in both languages.

Each of the students in the study displayed differential strengths across settings in both English and Spanish. All demonstrated their greatest abilities in small group activities. The change in performance across setting was most noticeable for the student who was perceived to have the greatest difficulties with language.

It was the teacher's perception that over the years the students had developed a negative attitude towards Spanish and towards themselves as Spanish speakers. He saw this as the result of their having spent several years not understanding the instruction in monolingual English classrooms. To the degree that each of the students seemed to have internalized a negative self perception, their attitude towards the use of Spanish varied, as did the language abilities displayed in classroom instruction. According to the

students, they all enjoyed being in a bilingual program, but they all considered English to be the appropriate language for instruction and other school-related activities. One of the students rejected virtually all use of Spanish in the school setting, though she was a dominant Spanish speaker who had difficulty clearly expressing herself in English.

The students' homes were found to be rich environments for a variety of language uses in Spanish. However, even at home, three of the students chose to function in English as much as possible, except when interacting with their monolingual parents. This rejection of Spanish may have implications for the academic achievement of the students, since it appears to limit their language interaction in the home. This restricted interaction with language does not appear to be the result of a "language poor" home environment but rather reflects the external social pressure exerted against Spanish language use. Simultaneously, access to information in English may be limited because of inadequate English skills. In school, this situation is aggravated in the intermediate grades, when instruction traditionally ceases to emphasize direct interaction and involvement with learning and depends increasingly on decontextualized verbal language for instruction.

Instructional program.

Several themes related to instruction emerged from the data. The instructional program as it was implemented was not specifically directed toward the development of language skills in English, nor did it support the development of academic or cognitive skills in Spanish. The notion of language development as the expansion of the capability to articulate clearly or as an "expression of meaning" was not evident.

The teacher and aide had created a warm and accepting environment in which all students were respected and supported emotionally, but the students for the most part were passive learners. The teacher did 90% of the talking. Although his explanations were always given in a comprehensible fashion, with examples and demonstrations, few questions above the comprehension and knowledge level were asked. The teacher did create limited opportunities for small group interaction, but these were not designed to actively foster linguistic development. Across settings, students were seldom asked to do tasks which required the conceptualization or verbalization of abstract principles. The whole-class setting, in which they spent most of their time, and from which they were most often viewed by the teacher, was the one in which these students demonstrated the least proficiency and were least productive.

To the extent that Spanish was used in the classroom, data indicated it had a positive effect on the students' attitudes towards school and towards the Spanish language. There were several indications that students' language attitudes can be positively influenced within an environment of active support. Reina had requested more instruction in Spanish from her mother. Marta's attention span was reported to have improved over previous years, and her behavior no longer indicated the shyness which had characterized her in the opinions of previous teachers. Ignacio's attitude towards school had also improved that year, as reflected by his beginning to take work home and return completed assignments. For Jose, it may have helped begin reversing the trend toward the weakening of his Spanish.

However, because the teacher perceived a negative attitude on the part of the students towards instruction in Spanish he modified the instructional

program to accomodate that perception. The teacher's acceptance of the student's initial displeasure over Spanish instruction meant that at least three of the students were denied the opportunity to receive instruction in their dominant language.

It became clear from the observations that the way in which Spanish was used in the classroom did not foster a positive attitude towards Spanish as a language for academic advancement. The reported failure of math lessons in Spanish, for example, appears to have had more to do with the students' attitudes--their internalized perceptions about the appropriate language for instruction in academic subjects--than with their inability to think about the concepts in Spanish.

Implications

The findings indicated that though none of the students was fully proficient in English, their teacher had underestimated their language abilities in both English and Spanish. In fact, they lacked many vocabulary items and did not have full facility with the syntactic structures of English. Their academic progress was hindered by their language limitations, but there was no conclusive evidence that they did not have the underlying abilities necessary for academic success. Seemingly teachers mistake a lack of vocabulary and a lack of verbal clarity for the absence of underlying thinking abilities. However, when the students were observed over a variety of contexts, they did evidence thinking at complex levels--they used analogies, synthesized information, made predictions and deductions, and tried to apply concepts learned in one subject area to another. Their lack of clarity in

verbal expression in the classroom created a false impression of their underlying capabilities.

A perception of students as limited language users interferes with their being perceived as having strengths. This deficit perspective was reflected in the kinds of tasks that students were asked to perform in the classroom i.e., the rote memorization of spelling words, skill sheets and a focus on workbooks in reading. The findings indicated that these students could benefit greatly from a strong emphasis on extending and elaborating communication skills. Students who speak English as a second language, need to be actively engaged in tasks which require them to express their thoughts verbally and which focus their language on concept development in the content areas.

Along with the notion of cognitive deficiencies students were also misperceived as not being oriented towards academics, particularly when they left school. Again, the data contradicted this assumption. All of the students were interested in learning about new ideas and they all liked to read on their own. They played school at home, and they read before they went to sleep.

The question must finally be asked, "What light does this study shed on the notion of semilingualism?" The data from the study refute the idea that the students codeswitch because they don't have two complete structures. The students did codeswitch but their use of codeswitching most often served a social function for them.

The data strongly confirmed the notion that teachers perceive their students as limited and adapt the instructional program to suit that perception. The students all exhibited qualities which might label them as

semilingual. For example, there was substantial evidence to indicate that Jose's Spanish was in a state of deterioration and that he may have been in a transition stage in a process where English was replacing Spanish. But, there was no evidence to support the conclusion that his conceptual abilities had suffered as a result.

This is not to say that the students did not have difficulties with language. They did. They lacked vocabulary and clarity of expression, and they had not yet fully mastered the syntactic system of English. They did not, however, lack the ability to use language as a vehicle for self-expression both socially and cognitively. It is the interpretation of the meaning of the students' shortcomings which is crucial. Teachers' misperceptions of the student's use of language at home and their attitudes towards school, helps to perpetuate the syndrome of lowered expectations for children with perceived limitations.

Reina, Marta, Jose and Ignacio were all potential fluent bilingual adults. However, they were not viewed in school as students with prior skills which could contribute to their academic success. The results of this study indicate that the emphasis in the discussion of second language learners needs to move away from a deficit view. It is necessary to examine the ways in which second language learners demonstrate their competencies, and to focus this discussion on organizing instructional programs which build upon them. When ill-defined terms such as semilingualism are used to describe the parameters of students' abilities, the skills students actually possess are likely to be ignored.

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